



University of
South Australia

Guidelines on Electronic Communications with Students

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AMENDMENTS:

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CROSS REFERENCES:

- A-34: Access to UniSA students, staff and data
- A-46: Confidentiality of students' personal information
- C-1: Inclusive language
- C-5: Public statements and representation by members of University staff and students
- C-12: Sexual harassment
- C-21: Anti-racism
- C-22: Acceptable use of Information Technology (IT) facilities
- Code of Ethical Conduct
- A code of good practice: Relationships between staff and students
- *Electronic Transactions Act 1999* (Cwth)
- Guidelines for staff on the use of IT facilities, including email and the internet
- HR-32: Outside Work Policy
- Privacy Act 1988 (Information Privacy Principles for Commonwealth Agencies)
- Records Management policy
- *Spam Act 2003* (Cwth)
- UniSA Crisis Management Framework
- UniSA Social Media Guidelines
- UniSA Style Guide

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Introduction

The University of South Australia (UniSA) uses electronic methods of communication to keep in regular contact with its students.

This includes the delivery of formal communications (see examples below) from UniSA, such as information about particular requirements or entitlements, about particular actions that must be taken by students, or about important events in the UniSA calendar such as graduations and enrolments.

It also includes more general announcements (see examples below) to students about a range of university activities and events, and other matters that are deemed important, about which details are provided by way of general information, but which do not constitute a formal communication by UniSA.

The main methods by which UniSA communicates electronically with students are student email, messages posted on UniSA's student portal, myUniSA, the student learning environment, *learnonline*, and SMS notifications to a student's nominated mobile phone number. There are other communication methods with students through the UniSA social media channels. Please refer to the *UniSA Social Media guidelines*.

These guidelines are intended to provide direction on the form of electronic communication to all students, large groups of students or a particular cohort of students.

Compliance with the Spam Act

The Spam Act 2003 regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages in Australia. The *Guidelines for staff on use of IT facilities, including email and the internet* provide more information about how the Act applies in the UniSA environment. The [Guidelines](#) are available on the UniSA website.

Principles

Communication by email from UniSA to all students or large groups of students should be considered to be equivalent to written communication sent by post. It should therefore be used sparingly, in order to preserve both the impact of the medium, and its utility to students.

More general announcements to students should not be sent via email, but should instead be posted on UniSA's student portal, *myUniSA*.

Guidelines

1. Formal communication through student email

- 1.1 Email communications sent to all students, or to a large group of students through a standard distribution list, should therefore be restricted to matters which might be considered to be formal communications from UniSA about a particular matter.
- 1.2 Examples of such matters might include:
 - a. The provision of information about significant UniSA processes, for example, dates and major events in the UniSA calendar;
 - b. Notification of the provision of important information (such as notification that a student's Commonwealth Assistance Notice has been provided on-line);
 - c. Communication about matters affecting an individual student's enrolment, results, financial standing, graduation, etc.;
 - d. Notification of the requirement for a particular action to be taken by a student or group of students;
 - e. Statements on important or strategic matters by senior officers of UniSA.
- 1.3 Email communications sent to the distribution list 'all students' must be approved by the Director: Student and Academic Services. Depending on the content, formal authorisation may also need to be sought from an appropriate line manager.

- 1.4 Communication should only be sent through UniSA's standard student email distribution lists when it is material to the interests of the audience to whom it is sent (this is also required under the provisions of the *Spam Act 2003*).

2. Communication through the student portal

- 2.1 General announcements for students should be posted on UniSA's student portal, *myUniSA*. Examples of announcements which might be posted to the portal include:
- a. Information on a particular event, activity or service which might be of interest to students, but which does not form a major part of the UniSA calendar and which not all recipients are expected to attend, participate in, or take advantage of;
 - b. Information which is provided by way of interest, and which is deemed to be relevant to its audience, but which is not essential to their enrolment and progress at UniSA.
- 2.2 Formal communications that are sent to students by email may, in addition, be announced on the student portal, e.g. letting students know that results are available.
- 2.3 Announcements posted on the student portal consist of a single line heading, followed by a one or two sentence subheading, along with a hyperlink to further information (provided either on a web page, or as a document in Microsoft Word format). Please use the portal message request form which can be found on the [staff portal](#).
- 2.4 All announcements should be given a clear commencement date, as well as a date for removal, which should not be later than 14 days after first posting.
- 2.5 Announcements should clearly indicate their intended audience. For assistance, use the student audience guide when making the selection in the announcement.
- 2.6 Announcements for students in a particular target group are only visible to students in that group.
- 2.7 In cases where it is not possible to communicate directly with a target group of students through the student portal (as the technical ability to select this particular audience does not currently exist), it may be appropriate to use an email distribution list to target these students directly, provided the communication is material to the interests of the audience to whom it is sent. Examples of such targeted communications might include:
- a. Announcements to students on a particular campus about relevant events, services or facilities
 - b. Announcements to particular subgroups of students - for example international students by country of origin.

3. Communication through the SMS Application

- 3.1 The SMS application must not be used for formal communication to students. Written communications, student emails and messages via *myUniSA* are the methods of formal communication.
- 3.2 If time is of the essence to communicate with students, then the SMS application may be used to supplement email and announcements for formal communications.
- 3.3 Examples of appropriate use for using SMS to supplement formal communications include:
- a. notifying students when classes have been moved or cancelled at the last moment
 - b. notifying students if there has been a crisis on campus which may affect them
 - c. last minute changes to exam timetable/venue
 - d. notifying students that results are available.

- 3.4 Where staff are providing additional customer service and reminding students of upcoming deadlines the SMS application can be utilised. This service should be considered as a value added service only.
- 3.5 The ability to contact students via SMS will be restricted and any staff requiring access to this service will require approval from their cost centre manager.
- 3.6 The application must not be used for promotion of non-UniSA related events or for personal use.
- 3.7 The SMS application has an auditing application which records the following information:
 - a. who sent the message
 - b. when the message was sent
 - c. the recipients of the message
 - d. the message content.
- 3.8 Staff should not assume all students in any particular target group or cohort will receive the SMS.

4. Communication with students who do not have access to electronic communication

- 4.1 Students who do not have access to electronic communication are identified at the point of enrolment, and an indicator is placed on the UniSA student system.
- 4.2 Where communications are sent to all students or to a large group of students via electronic means, consideration must be given to appropriate methods of communicating the information to students without access to online facilities.
- 4.3 Where an email is sent through a distribution list to a student who does not have access to online facilities, a message will be sent to alert the sender that the communication must be sent to the student's postal address as recorded on the student system.
- 4.4 Email messages approved by the Director: Student and Academic Services will be sent by SAS to the student's postal address as recorded on the student system.